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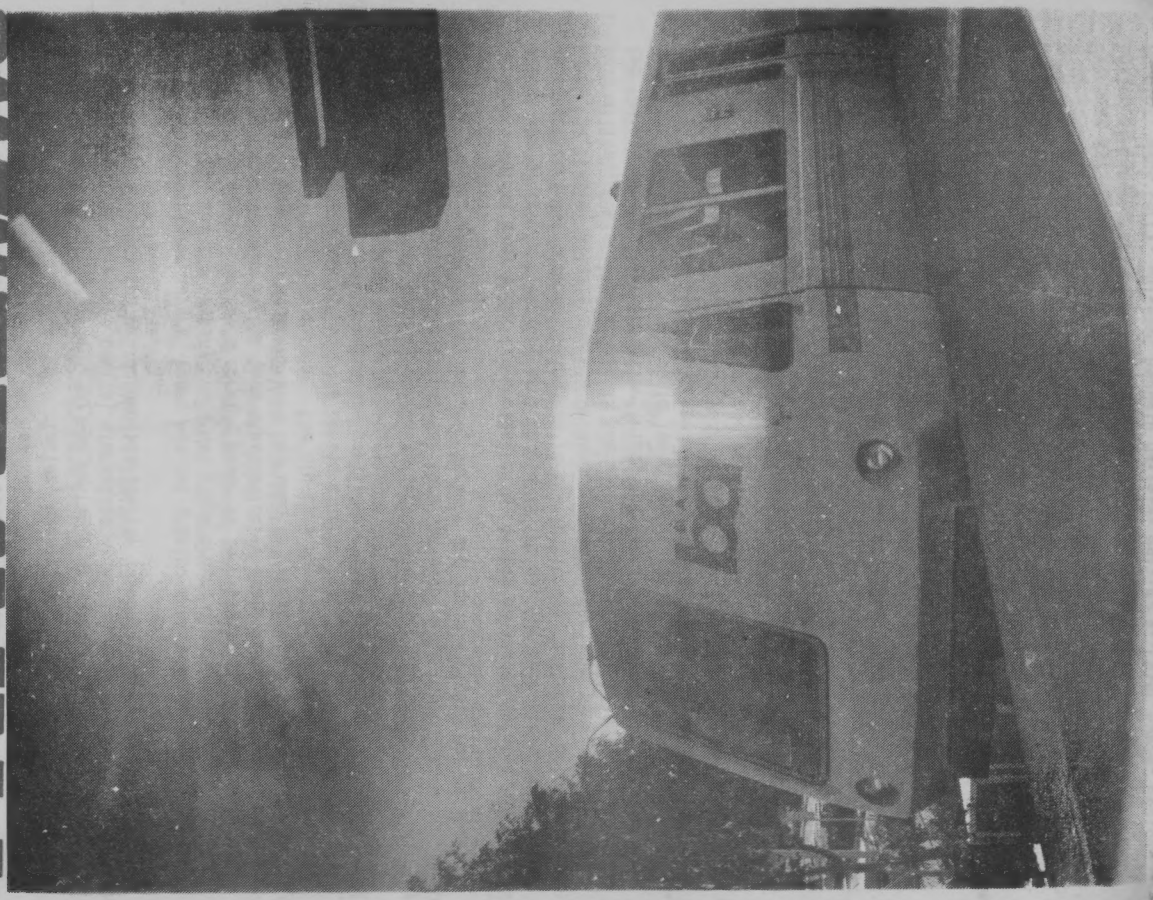
VOL. 9 NO. 3
MARCH 1979
ISSUE NO. 185

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS



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Railway Passenger Car Annual

At long last we have finished compiling Volume 4 of the RAILWAY PASSENGER CAR ANNUAL. Our printer has been co-operative and we have the book in stock ready for immediate mailing.

As in past issues this valuable compilation contains a listing in numerical order of all Railroad, Operating Authority, and Transit passenger cars in active service during 1978 showing prior owners, names and numbers, builder and year built.

Besides showing disposition of all cars retired in the past couple of years, we have a special feature in this volume showing the complete disposition of over 400 Amtrak cars sold since the energy crises in 1974.

Note: The amount of material to be included in the Private Owner and Museum section has become so great that this will have to be covered in a separate Volume from now on. You will be advised of this volume and the price as soon as we can schedule a publication date. Our goal is to have this out before Christmas 1978.

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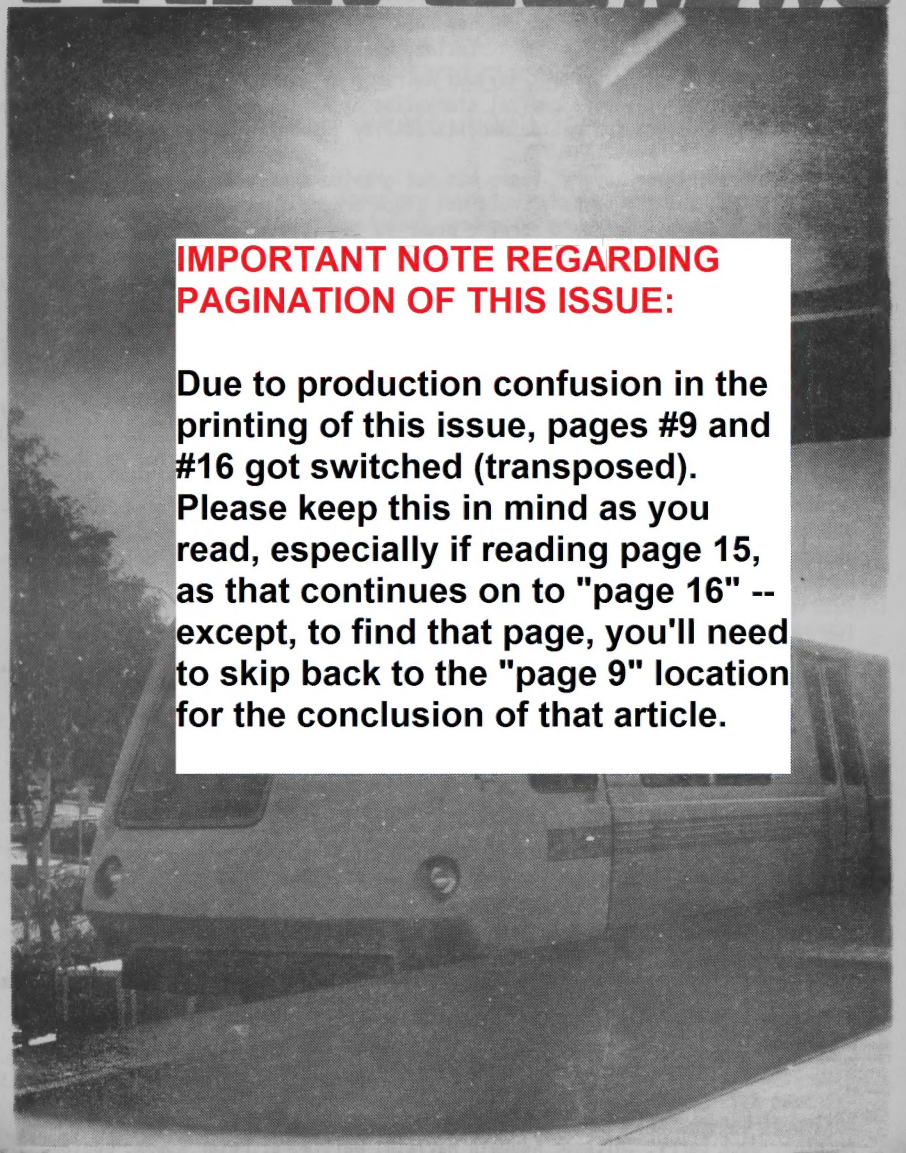

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING PAGINATION OF THIS ISSUE:

Due to production confusion in the printing of this issue, pages #9 and #16 got switched (transposed). Please keep this in mind as you read, especially if reading page 15, as that continues on to "page 16" -- except, to find that page, you'll need to skip back to the "page 9" location for the conclusion of that article.

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LETTERS

In your last issue it was stated that four steam generator cars are needed on the EMPIRE BUILDER. What a joke!

Being in the heating and air conditioning service industry, I've been amazed at the excuses for frozen cars. There are only three items that could cause steam lines to freeze up: the (1) steam pressure reducing valve, (2) solenoid valve, and (3) steam traps. These items are not obsolete! They are used by the thousands in commercial steam heating systems, nationwide.

You can have ten steam generator cars and if the above items are not working, the lines will freeze, because of no maintenance being performed on the cars. The parts are available, so what is the problem? Guess!

Ken Roeh
Yakima, Washington

While the federal government may cut Amtrak's system almost in half, little attention has been given to capital starvation at Amtrak--a problem that has given its management ulcers and restrained its ability to keep increasing passenger use of trains.

The government for several years has not granted enough funds to meet Amtrak's capital needs, and the company could not place orders for new passenger cars in sufficient numbers. Amtrak's earning power is terribly below that of other national railroads because it has such a pathetically small number of cars, many of which are 30 years old and were worn out when Amtrak obtained them from private railroads nearly eight years ago. The old cars have been patched and overhauled by Amtrak time and again. Despite heroic efforts, they are certain to fail again. It is an absurd cycle, one which was partially responsible for nearly killing rail passenger service before Amtrak's creation.

About 2000 cars are used by Amtrak to servce almost 28,000 miles of routes. By comparison, the Japanese system has two cars for every mile (26,000 cars for 13,000 miles). Similar examples for England, Germany and South Africa. Amtrak should have it so good!

Should Amtrak stay about its present size, it has an immediate need, even without an energy crisis diverting more people to trains, for approximately 450 new passenger cars for trains linking New York with Florida, Montreal, Chicago, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Atlanta and New Orleans. An order for 1000 cars, costing about $680 million, would allow Amtrak to increase frequency on many routes from one to two trains, give passengers better trips, and increase revenue in greater proportion to cost increases. This would lower the financial loss per passenger served.

Amtrak's capital requests have been small compared to amounts pumped yearly into other transport modes. Last year various levels of government poured $27 billion into highway construction and maintenance while Amtrak asked for $316 million for improvements--note the difference between billions and millions.

But Amtrak's capital was cut to $130 million, an amount about equal to the cost of building one-third of one mile of New York City's controversial West Side Highway!

Joseph Vranich
Arlington, Virginia

(Ed. note: While Mr. Vranich is an Amtrak employee, the views expressed are his alone. Previously he was executive director of the National Association of Railroad Passengers.)

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THE COVER STORY

BART UNDER ECLIPSE: This photo was taken at 8:20am PST at the Richmond CA BART station, a few minutes after the height of the solar eclipse on Feb 26. In this part of the country, the total eclipse seen farther north was a partial one, and thru deep filters the sun appeared as a crescent moon, with the "legs" of the crescent facing left. The sky was clear, but was darkened in our photo by filters over the upper portion of the lens of our trusty Exakta. RTN photo.

DEEP CONCERN IS VOICED OVER CUTBACK PLAN FOR AMTRAK SYSTEM

Observers of the Washington scene are extremely concerned about the outcome of the DOT's plan to cut back the Amtrak system by about 43%. Most of this concern centers about the relatively small reaction by citizens thus far. It has been said that Congressmen are not receiving enough mail from their constituents to urge them to oppose the plan. One Washington observer noted that it is essential that letter writers contact their Congressmen by the end of March in order to allow enough time for Congress to act by the May 15 deadline.

RTN has learned that Congressman Harley Staggers' key committee has been advised by its subcommittee studying the DOT plan that the committee should not oppose the cutbacks. This development will make it significantly more difficult for Congress to act against the cutback plan. Observers advise that citizens write to their own Congressman (just a brief note will suffice), urging him to oppose the DOT's plan to cut Amtrak, and if possible send a copy of the letter to Congressman Harley Staggers. (The address of all Congressmen is: House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515.) Observers advise writing to Congressmen first, since opposition to the plan should start in the House, and secondarily writing to one's Senators. (The address of all Senators is: U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510.)

The National Association of RR Passengers is also suggesting another approach: Rail supporters can circulate petitions for voters to sign, the petitions being arranged separately by Congressional district. Signers should give full names and address. A prominent local citizen should send the petitions to the relevant Congressman with a cover letter urging a "no vote on the DOT plan."

A letter writer in our last issue suggested obtaining the permission of friends to write Congressmen for them. (All these above actions are best taken before the end of March.)

The Senate Commerce Committee held hearings on the plan on Mar 5 & 12. Observers had mixed reactions about the progress of the hearings. At the Mar 5 hearing, Sen. Schmidt of New Mexico reportedly gave DOT Secretary Brock Adams a "good cross-examination" while the two Vermont Senators protested the exclusion of the MONTREALER. Senators Long and Cannon attended the hearing for the entire day, indicating good interest in the matter. At the Mar 12 hearing, Caltrans Director Adriana Gianturco testified, as did Arthur Lewis of the American Bus Association, among others.

An Amtrak spokesman estimated that in the first full week of March newspaper editorials were running about 4-to-1 in opposition to the DOT cutbacks. However, for the full time since the plan appeared Jan 31, editorial opinion has been only about 65% in opposition, he estimated--and many of the major influential papers such as the New York Times have taken the Administration's side against passenger trains.

In her Mar 12 testimony, Caltrans Director Gianturco made many of the points also given in her earlier letter to the DOT (see page 14). She also noted that Amtrak ridership increased 18% in the 1973-4 energy crisis. Gianturco said, "Whether petroleum use is limited by Sunday closing of gas stations, or rationing, or sttep, steep prices, the demand for Amtrak service is going to increase. We think demand for train service will soar in the face of a new energy crunch."

IMPORTANT ERROR CORRECTED

In our last issue, on page 4, we mistakenly referred to Senators Russell Long and Howard Cannon as Representatives.

★ AMTRAK PRESIDENT DOES NOT OPPOSE DOT PLAN

Amtrak President Alan S. Boyd in testimony before the subcommittee on surface transportation of the Senate Commerce Committee on Mar 5 presented a neutral stance toward the impending DOT cutbacks. While he said he was willing to operate any system that Congress dictates, he appeared more supportive of the reduced system recommended by the DOT. "We've got to have a smaller system if we're going to have a system at all," he said. "We're having breakdowns; our maintenance costs are out of sight and there's a lot of junk we're hauling around out there." (The above quotes did not appear in the official Amtrak press release, but were reported in the Washington Post on Mar 6. The press release gave the following quotes:) "Amtrak--as a public service--is spread too thin. We cannot do the job the American public expects of us, given the extent of the route structure we now have and the resources at our disposal." Boyd agreed that the DOT-recommended network can be operated for $552 million in fiscal 1980 and would probably produce the $325 million in revenue that DOT predicts. "But now comes the tough part," Boyd said; "The Congress must decide whether the recommended route structure and the funding level is acceptable." "What system will give better service to the existing and potential market for a national rail passenger network?"

Boyd said that whatever system Amtrak is given to run..."be it the DOT plan or something else that approximates that system...we must have the resources to implement and operate it well." At this critical juncture in Amtrak's life, Boyd said, there is a necessity that "we have a total national commitment to operate a national rail passenger system. If the commitment is hesitant or if we cannot provide better service over whatever route system the Congress dictates, I personally believe it would be better to close Amtrak down."

Clearly Boyd left the responsibility for enlarging the system beyond the DOT plan to the American citizens, acting thru their Congressmen and Senators.

★ AMTRAK YIELDS TO DOT, RAISES FARES

Amtrak raised fares on Mar 5 an average of 6% on most of its routes, and 10% in the Northeast Corridor. The latest increase follows an agreement with the DOT that revenues should cover 44% of expenses by fiscal 1982. The DOT wants 50% covered by 1985, and said that as of the date of the DOT cutback report, fares covered 37% of expenses. (In comparison, former DOT Secretary Coleman revealed that airline fares cover only one-third--about 33% of the costs of running the aircraft. Critics of the DOT plan are pointing to this inequity, and Caltrans Director Gianturco in her letter to DOT--see page 14--indicated Caltrans has some concerns about fare policies which would be covered in a later letter.)

★ SUPERLINERS MAKE FIRST REVENUE RUNS

The first Amtrak bi-level "Superliner" coaches went into revenue service on Feb 26 with virtually no advance publicity. Two cars, nos. 34013 and 34014 were

pulled by F40PHR engine no. 230 to comprise train 337, the 7:45pm departure from Chicago to Milwaukee. Train 337 normally is a Turboliner. There were 63 people aboard the train, which offered a limited food service in the lower handicapped section of a coach. The same cars had made a test non-revenue roundtrip Feb 21 on the same route. The train was to return to Chicago the morning of Feb 27 as train 332, the 8:30 departure. Then it was to run regularly as train 335, the 4:30pm departure from Chicago, and train 330, the 6:55am departure from Milwaukee. On Mar 8 the Superliners were placed on the ILLINOIS ZEPHYR, Chicago-Quincy, instead of the Chicago-Milwaukee run, in order to train BN crews in the operation of the new cars. The consist of the first ILLINOIS ZEPHYR, train 347, with Superliners on Mar 8 was F40PHR engine 245, and coaches 34016, 34013, and 34014.

REACTIONS TO

THE DOT PLAN

Pro and con statements on the DOT's plan to cut back Amtrak, from many sources.

TOM WICKER IN NEW YORK TIMES, FEB 25: "Mr. Adams's meat-ax assault on Amtrak is all the more weird because he himself said recently that future transportation decisions would be studied for their impact on energy usage. Worse, he demanded policies of Amtrak that would drive away riders from the poor bleeding stump of a system he would permit still to operate."

ROSS CAPON OF NARP, QUOTED IN CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY: "Sooner or later, people are going to figure out the relationship between the energy crisis and Amtrak. This country generally solves crises after we get into them. When the gas lines begin forming, our arguments will take hold."

SENATOR DAVE DURENBERGER OF MINNESOTA IN LETTER TO BROCK ADAMS: "To discontinue one (Chicago-Seattle) line would present the users of such service an unbearable hardship in light of lack of alternative transportation systems and the recently enacted price increases of oil imported from OPEC."

SENATOR LEAHY OF VERMONT IN CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, FEB 7: "Instead of responding to this congressional instruction (to design the optimal system), DOT, in cahoots with the Office of Management and Budget, arbitrarily selected a figure, $552 million in operating subsidy, and designed a national rail passenger system within that figure. This is not only unresponsive to the congressional request, it raises serious political and legal questions as well.

"Congress, not the Executive, is responsible for creating national policy. Elected officials, not anonymous bureaucrats or political appointees, were entrusted with this task, because we have a direct responsibility to the people of this Nation, our constituents. This is a basic, constitutional requirement. It is not to be ignored, bypassed, or forgotten.

"However, this DOT plan represents an Executive power play designed to usurp the constitutional delegation and separation of power. Make no mistake, when DOT and OMB decided how much they would spend on an Amtrak system, they were declaring national policy."

WASHINGTON STAR EDITORIAL, FEB 4: "The Carter administration plan to cut Amtrak's mileage and federal subsidy is drawing predictable protests from the few travelers who may be inconvenienced, from a number of congressmen whose districts will be affected, from railroad buffs and persons overcome by nostalgia for the "good old days" of railroading. But the administration's plan makes sense."

NEW YORK STATE DOT PRESS RELEASE, FEB 6: "Existing passenger train service throughout New York State would be preserved and improved under a federal plan which otherwise calls for substantial cuts in Amtrak's national network."

THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN (OKLAHOMA CITY) EDITORIAL, FEB 2: "Except for a few high-density routes, it's highly unlikely that rail passenger service can ever again be a viable proposition. And the sooner Congress stops throwing billions of our tax dollars down the Amtrak rathole, the better."

JOHN DELORA, DIRECTOR OF MICHIGAN PASSENGER FOUNDATION, IN TESTIMONY TO U.S. SENATE, MAR 12: "Pollsters have shown the public wants more, not less, Amtrak service. At the hearings on the preliminary DOT plan, hundreds of people turned out and spoke in favor of keeping or expanding Amtrak service. Virtually the only voices raised in favor of cutting Amtrak service were employees of bus companies. For DOT to have so totally ignored the public's comments is a prime example of why so many are so disgusted with government. We can no longer afford to close our eyes to the energy shortage, nor can we close our ears to the voices of the people."

DOT PLAN FACT SHEET

The DOT plan would:

1) Eliminate ALL service to 11 of America's 50 largest cities (Dallas, Indianapolis, Columbus, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Nashville, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Fort Worth, Birmingham).
2) Significantly REDUCE service to 14 other cities among the 50 largest (Houston, St. Louis, New Orleans, Seattle, Jacksonville, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, San Antonio, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Portland, Miami, Tampa, St. Paul).
3) Eliminate ALL service to such smaller bus regionally vital business-tourist cities as Boise, Little Rock, Austin, Charleston WV, Roanoke, Albuquerque, Montgomery, Charlotte, and Greensboro.
4) Add only ONE major city to the system: Las Vegas NV; and not improve service to a single other major urban area.
5) ELIMINATE useful service to 9 states (Idaho, New Mexico, Nebraska, Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Vermont, West Virginia, Oklahoma) and SEVERELY CURTAIL service to 10 other states (Indiana, Ohio, Oregon, Montana, Virginia, Texas, North Dakota, Arizona, Iowa, Kentucky).
6) ELIMINATE service to 15 state capitols, leaving only 21 state capitols (less than 50%) with rail passenger service.
7) ELIMINATE or SEVERELY CURTAIL service to the "Sun Belt" states, where population growth is greatest.

--John Porco, Columbia, Maryland

CITIZENS FOR RAIL CALIFORNIA POSITION PAPER ON DOT PLAN: "U.S. DOT resembles a doctor who, even before investigating the nature of his patient's disease, amputates all his limbs on the theory that he will thereafter suffer proprotionately less illness and spend less on food and clothing. CRC submits that this mad logic does not serve the national interest in achieving a balanced transportation system. The number of train miles operated by Amtrak must be conserved: reduction in the face of an energy crisis is pure folly."

ARKANSAS ASSOCIATION OF RR PASSENGERS: "The DOT preliminary plan called for the reduction of 27% of the Amtrak system. Throughout the ICC hearings last summer, the public repeatedly called for more and better trains, not a reduction ... In view of the response at these nationwide hearings, the DOT proposal to eliminate 43% of the trains can be viewed as nothing less than an arrogant and blatant disregard for the public's wishes."

DR. E. P. HAMILTON III, CHAIRMAN, AMTRAK COMMITTEE, AUSTIN TX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: "The overwhelming evidence, furnished by DOT and Amtrak themselves, indicates a coverup of the inordinate expense, unfavorable economies, and gross unprofitability of the Northeast Corridor. If the historical DOT/Amtrak position that the Corridor has the only potential for being profitable were really true, then they should be willing to subject the NEC (2% of the route miles) to a fair economic comparison with the remaining 98% of the system. Instead, it has been

found that (1) the basis for comparison is not fair, with two different accounting methods being used, and (2) more importantly, that Amtrak is allocating a large portion of the NEC's costs to the national system and not to the Corridor in order to camouflage its lack of profitability."

READER MARTIN SOHOLT OF IDAHO IN LETTER TO CONGRESSMEN: "The President calls Amtrak a 'luxury' that we cannot afford. We as consumers consider Amtrak a necessity that we cannot afford to lose."

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER EDITORIAL, JAN 30: "Granted that money can't be spread around as if it's going out of style or it will go out of style, what sense does it make to spend less in the potentially most energy-efficient mode of transportation, the rails, while spending more on the most energy-wasteful, highways?"

DR. CHARLES DUNN, NARP DIRECTOR (FLORIDA): "In essence, Mr. Adams is acting contrary to public opinion polls, previous hearings by Amtrak (on the FLORIDIAN), the ICC (on the SOUTHERN CRESCENT), the RSPO (on the total system); patronage ridership figures, the nation's energy policy and every other logical argument. The Secretary should be responsive to people--and it is obvious that he isn't."

SENATOR JOHN TOWER OF TEXAS: "We should look to an equitable reduction, while at the same time examining ways to upgrade the service. There is nothing fair about asking most of the nation to pay for an overpriced $1.8 billion Corridor when we can't even get them to fix 35 miles of track between Dallas and Austin."

PENNSYLVANIA DOT ENGINEER, QUOTED IN HARRISBURG PATRIOT, FEB 1: "This is absolutely the wrong direction to take. By chopping routes and chopping service, you're going to throw the baby out with the bath water. I fear that if this is not stopped by the thinking people in Congress, and I hope there still are some, this severe fracturing of Amtrak will be the death knell for all intercity service in the nation."

JOHN VAUGHNS IN LETTER TO LOS ANGELES TIMES, FEB 25: "The plan to dismember Amtrak is a look at the problem thru the wrong end of the telescope. Instead of determining what level of rail service the country needs and funding it as economically as possible, the Carter Administration is eliminating trains almost at random to fall within some arbitrary budget figure."

JAMES M. S. ULLMAN, NARP DIRECTOR (CONNECTICUT) IN NY TIMES, FEB 19: "I submit that we have to recognize that the railroad is another form of highway and has to be sustained as a highway. It is a national resource we cannot afford to lose. And we cannot afford to have the Amtrak system decimated."

GAYLORD SHAW IN LOS ANGELES TIMES, MAR 3: "Congress cannot amend the plan; it can only scrap it--as it did more than a year ago when Adams proposed a different set of train terminations. The chances of a congressional veto this time appear slim, though, because of widespread concern about federal spending and inflation."

MARYLAND DOT SECRETARY JAMES O'DONNELL IN LETTER TO BROCK ADAMS, FEB 28: "The final report relies on statistics which are inconsistently applied, dismisses social needs as an "abstract nation", and virtually ignores the hard energy-related realities we face today and which will surely worsen in the months to come."

MAYOR FRANK EINSWEILER OF GALENA IL IN CHICAGO TRIBUNE, FEB 28: "We can no longer have time to play games with transportation or energy. Railroads can provide fast, clean, safe, cheap, and efficient transport for both people and freight, but not if they are short-changed in terms of national priorities."

READER BEN SHCAFFER OF LAUDERDALE LAKES, FL: "Instead of adding and improving passenger rail service in the U.S., the administration slogan seems to be: LET'S DEPEND ON ARAB OIL MORE BY CUTTING AMTRAK SOME MORE."

SAMUEL E. STOKES JR., NORTH EAST TRANSPORTATION COALITION: "If any leaders have a sense of a fair, balanced transportation system, if any leaders want to help this nation out of its dangerous energy corner and financial trap, they should...change our priorities. A widely expanded Amtrak system is a wise investment in the security of this country."

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

BART'S TRANSBAY TUBE remains closed while BART conducts smoke drills with volunteers. Safety officials require BART to install a sprinkler system in the tube before service can be resumed. The system was highly criticized by its own investigators in a report released Mar 6, for its disorganized response to the Jan 17 fire aboard a train in the tube.

VALPARAISO COMMUTER TRAINS were the subject of a short-notice discontinuance petition to take effect Mar 4, but the UTU and other supporters filed a protest with the ICC that inadequate notice had been given.

THE DOT CALLED a scientific meeting in Boston Feb 13-14 to try to "re-invent the automobile" in a more energy-efficient version.

TRANSIT BRIEFS: An investigation of braking problems in cold weather on ICG Highliner commuter trains in Chicago was re-opened by the FRA on Feb 12..... Chicago's transit system suffered winter snow problems this year as severe as those of Boston last year; but Boston developed a simple solution to burning-out electric motors due to snow clogging--place linen over the vent holes..... An ICG engineer averted a disaster by cool thinking, on Chicago commuter train 702 on Feb 12; the train's brakes failed, and the engineer radioed the train ahead to move on (thru a red light) so when they met they were running almost the same speed, and coupled... Atlanta's MARTA rapid transit system did a special VIP run Feb 14on the 6.7-mile East Line, scheduled for opening July 1..... Formation of the Surface Transportation Administration is "stalled" at the White House, due to opposition..... Caltrans on Feb 21 proposed building a streetcar line at South Lake Tahoe.....

RAIL CANADA

VIA RAIL CANADA was advertising in Canadian newspapers in late Jan for a number of positions--project managers, systems analysts, financial analysts, engineers and engineering managers, industrial engineers, and government liaison mgr.

OVER 1000 ONTARIANS were stranded Feb 11 in Quebec City, where they had gone by bus for the Carnival. The visitors had to stay two extra days after a bad joke played on them by the Voyageur Bus strikers. Strikers picketed the garage where their chartered buses were stored, and the drivers refused to cross the picket lines. The bus company (Voyageur Colonial) had to offer room and board in Quebec hotels while reaching an agreement with VIA Rail to carry the travelers home. VIA added cars to regular trains to bail out the travelers.

SOME WINTER DISRUPTIONS of VIA service: Feb 13: a freight derailment at Armstrong, Ont. delayed VIA train 3. A derailment at Valemount, B.C. caused trains 3/4 to turn back at Edmonton. Passengers on delayed train 3 of Feb 12 allowed to stay aboard until after breakfast today, then sent on by bus and air. Today's #3 due Edmonton 8pm, will terminate and cover train 4 for Feb 14. Temperature in -30° C. range. Consist of train 3/4 Edmonton Feb 13, turned back to run East: engines 6512, 6610; baggage 9651, coach 5569, cafe 764, Dayniter coach 5710, diner 1367, slpr lounge "Cape Chignecto", slprs "Escuminac" and "Edmunston". A CN freight derailed in the Rockies late on Feb 15, stranding 118 passengers in Edmonton overnight. The CP line in the Rogers Pass area was closed late on Feb 13 by snowslide damage to a bridge. Both railways suffered blockages of track during the second week of Feb, due to winter problems.

SASKATCHEWAN RAIL COMMITTEE of Transport 2000 on Feb 7 filed a formal protest withthe CTC, deploring the performance of VIA West transcon trains this winter.

VIA RAIL CANADA has started the push to get electric heating on its trains.

SPRING AND SUMMER reservations are not yet being taken by VIA (as of the end of Feb) in order to "see how demand develops" before assigning equipment. Rail critics call this a stunt to cut ridership on long-distance trains.

(4) SUNSET LIMITED. The DOT's original report indicated that daily service would be more cost-effective than tri-weekly service, and that it would not propose to have less than daily service in its route restructuring. There is not adequate rationale given for the present proposal, which eliminates daily service in 9 western states, including Texas, Arizona and New Mexico.

(5) SAN DIEGANS. The DOT's policy favoring 403(b) provision of local service is inconsistent with its proposal to keep 100% of all Northeast Corridor Amtrak trains in the basic system. Coastal California merits an equivalent amount of per capita service to that of the Northeast Corridor. In terms of scheduling, this would mean hourly SAN DIEGAN service, three daily trains between L.A. and San Francisco, and five daily trains between San Francisco and Sacramento. The position of DOT that $6 billion of track improvements should be spent in the Northeast Corridor but that no other regions should have capital expenditures on intercity rail routes is irrational.

OTHER ISSUES: (1) ENERGY. Effectively operated intercity train service can be a major source of fuel savings. For example, the San Diego-Los Angeles route produces 100 passenger miles per gallon. Auto travel and air travel both average less than 20 passenger mpg. If SAN DIEGAN passengers had used automobiles instead, 2 million more gallons of oil would have been consumed in 1978. Buses save energy too, but few automobile or airline travelers would willingly switch to the intercity bus. (2) CAPITAL FUNDING. The DOT report does not adequately address the problem of outmoded equipment. The majority of Amtrak's equipment was built more than 25 years ago, despite some recent purchases. We doubt whether Americans would willingly ride DC-3's or 1952 automobiles or buses. To restrict Amtrak's capital funding as severely as DOT proposes, limits Amtrak's ability to attract passengers. It is unwise to mortgage the future of passenger train service in order to obtain minor short-term savings.

EDITORIAL

★★★ LAST CHANCE TO SAVE AMTRAK ★★★

It seems that about once a year passenger train supporters are called upon to come to the aid of Amtrak--a tiring, repetitive job. This time, however, the situation is really grave. At this time things look as if the DOT plan to cut our passenger train system by 43% may really be allowed to stand. Congress is not yet feeling enough pressure from the grass roots to vote against it, and new Amtrak president Boyd has not opposed the plan in his testimony before the Senate. Amtrak is said to feel that the plan will pass by Congress unopposed except for the possible inclusion of one or two more trains--the MONTREALER and perhaps the CRESCENT or maybe one train to Texas.

It is clearly up to the grass roots now to push hard to retain a passenger train system the size of our present meager network. It will be necessary for train supporters to contact Congressmen (primarily) and Senators (secondarily) within the next week or so--before the end of March if at all possible--in order to ensure that our wants are made known.

Washington is run by people who act not on the basis of reason or sensibility but on the basis of power--and they react to those who have power and numbers (whether numbers counted in dollars or in heads). The chain of influence in Washington goes from the powerful automobile and oil lobbyists to Jimmy Carter to Brock Adams to Alan Boyd to individual Senators and Congressmen. Adams and Boyd have told the Congressmen the same story, and now it's up to us, who hold not money but votes, to tell ours.

(page printed out of sequence) → page 16

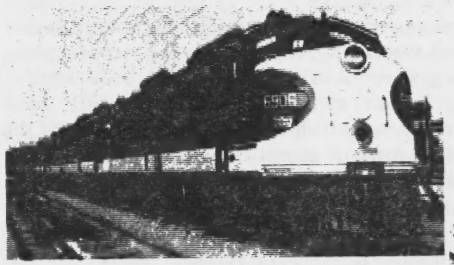
this evening. One Southern official mentioned that steam trips would continue for at least two years and that the Southern had just leased the Royal Hudson steam locomotive, long in Pennsylvania, for use this year, and that it would be in Birmingham by Feb 5.

Two elderly ladies who had boarded for their winter trip to the coast were taken by surprise with all of the activity, not realizing just what it was about, but loving every minute of it nonetheless, even if their dinner would be somewhat late. The diner was still serving after midnight, and the impeccably attired steward--he could have served on an international flight that evening and fit right in--and his dining room crew maintained their freshness and congenial attitude right up until the last patron departed at about one in the morning, just before arriving in Greensboro.

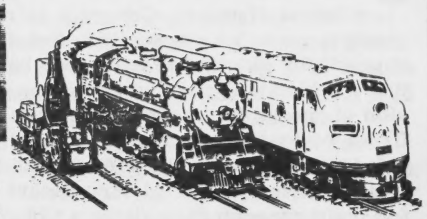
Washington's Channel 5 filmed the festivities to Greensboro and turned there with many others of us and continued their filming at breakfast the next morning. Channel 7, Roanoke, shot footage as far as Charlottesville, where they detrained to return home to western Virginia. By the time I sat down to dinner, at 11:00 pm, the roast and the sirloin stocks had been depleted, but everything else remained. So I enjoyed a Southern fried chicken dinner followed up with Southern (on-board baked) apple pie and cheese.

Greensboro at 1:15--right on the mark! Thirty of us would be making the turn here in this textile and college town. Train 2 would be about 15 minutes or so late so that allowed us about 1 1/2 hours to sit and chat or write cards or try to interest the agent in giving up what few Southern timetables he had left. Train 1, according to the Feb 2 Washington Post, would arrive in Brookwood (Peachtree Station) on time later that morning for a ceremony with the South Carolina Canal & Rail Road's "Best Friend of Charleston," which on Christmas Day in 1830 began regular railroad passenger service between Charleston SC and Augusta GA and was now on hand to see the last of the Southern passenger trains just over 148 years later. This event was also commemorated on the souvenir tickets passed out by the Southern conductor on this final run earlier in the evening.

"SOUTHERN CRESCENT" SOUVENIR TICKET



Last Run as a Southern Railway Train
January 31-February 1, 1979



Commemorating 148 Years of Passenger Train Service by Southern Railway and its Predecessor Lines

Train 2 northbound, the last SOUTHERN CRESCENT up from the Confederacy, arrived in Greensboro about 15 minutes late with a 13-car consist and a more subdued crowd--most were now asleep after all the partying. The dining car crew was just finishing their cleaning, and the bedroom/lounge (2351 "Crescent Harbor") had the only action in town, but it was dry--we're in North Carolina at the moment!

I thought I could get a few minutes of rest, but this would not happen except for about a half hour somewhere around 4:00am--too much going on.

I had heard that Graham Claytor, along with steam trip coordinator James Bistline, Transportation Vice President H. H. Bradley, and Passenger Director Orin Kell, had been enjoying the action in the lounge earlier that evening and doing very well with their rendition of "Wreck of Old 97." Channel 7, Atlanta, was on board this run and remained until Washington.

Since the dining car was usually open at 6:00am, I and the Washington TV crews were on hand for the first sitting. But since the crew had been so late the evening before, breakfast would be delayed a bit this morning, as the kitchen was not yet ready to serve. At 6:30 we were seated and served coffee as we awaited the kitchen's okay to eat. At 7:00 the orders were being taken, and I just could not resist one more ometette and those baked-on-board bran muffins such as Louis Price raved about in the Southern ads of a short time ago.

As the TV crews were filming, some college men and women, about three tables full, decided to liven up the morning by serving to all who wished some of their B&G Beaujolais, and then toasted the SOUTHERN CRESCENT as a train and the men and women who made it work so well. It was a real decent way to wrap up our arrival in Washington for the last time.

Washington arrived about 15 minutes late, and the Southern's three monogrammed E units were cut out 10 minutes later and sent to Ivy City. The New York section left, and that was it. The Last One.

Trains 1 and 2 are now trains 19 and 20 in the Amtrak scheme of things. Green and white gave way to red, blue and platinum mist. And the first edition of the CRESCENT from New Orleans, which left before we arrived in Washington, had freshly painted Amtrak E units on the front. No wasting any time here. The CRESCENT is daily now, and there is but one Birmingham station--Amtrak's.

The SOUTHERN CRESCENT was a train of class, style, dignity, and it remained so up to and during its final run, both north and south. An era has passed, and with it many of the finer touches to living, and the SOUTHERN CRESCENT was one of them.

CONSISTS of last SR-operated SOUTHERN CRESCENTS:

Train 1 southbound, Jan 31 from Washington: engines 6909, 6913, 6905 (E8's); cars 706 baggage, 815, 821, 819, 831 coaches, 2014 "Shenandoah River," 2686 (Amtrak), 2011 "Rivanna River" sleepers, 3309 diner, 2353 "Crescent Moon" bedroom-lounge, 829 coach, 2015 "Rappahannock River," 3400 "Emory River" sleepers, office car 7.

Train 2 northbound, Jan 31 from Atlanta: engines 6901, 6916, 6903 (E8's); cars 3589 baggage, 842, 816 coaches, 2012 "Saluda River," 2607 "Pacific Cove"-Amtrak, 2010 "Rapidan River" sleepers, 3307 diner, 2351 "Crescent Harbor" bedroom-lounge, 846, 827 coaches, 2016 "St Johns River," 3499 "Royal Palm" sleepers, office car 1.

CONSIST of first northbound Amtrak CRESCENT, Atlanta Feb 1:

Engines Amtrak 408 (E9A), SR 6911, SR 6912; cars (all Amtrak numbers) 5298 renumbered SR 52-seat coach, 5485 Central of Georgia coach "Ft. McPherson" renumbered, 5283 SR 52-seat coach renumbered, 3850 SR coach-lounge renumbered, 3410 Le Pub lounge, 8382 SR 44-seat diner renumbered, 3203 "Crystal Stream" sleeper-lounge, 2861 SR sleeper "Warrior River" renumbered, 2862 SR sleeper "French Broad River" renumbered.

The Amtrak CRESCENT runs daily New York-New Orleans, while the SR train ran only tri-weekly over the Atlanta-New Orleans leg of the route, and it carries a coach-lounge the entire distance, while the former train used a dome but not a lounge south of Atlanta. Amtrak will not obtain the sleeper-lounges and domes that SR used on the run.

★★★ A PETITION TO SAVE THE PASSENGER TRAINS ★★★

We the undersigned urge Congress to oppose the Federal Dept. of Transportation's plan to cut back the Amtrak passenger train system by 43 per cent.

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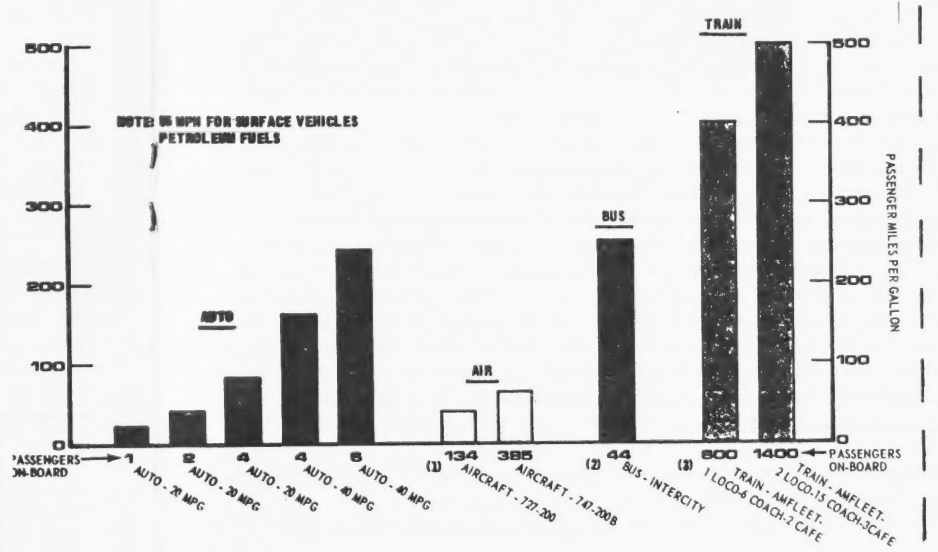
Amtrak prepared the graph below for distribution this month. It makes comparisons of "best case" fuel efficiency among auto-aircraft-bus-train modes. The data used are taken from reliable sources--Boeing Company, American Bus Association, General Motors and the Locomotive Encyclopedia.

The graph shows that the train is "the most energy effective of these (modes) for the mass movement of passengers." The graph is part of a Fact Sheet on Energy and Transportation prepared by Amtrak. The following comparisons from the Fact Sheet we also found interesting: an 18-car Amfleet train can carry 1400 passengers on a single track; the same number would require 32 buses with 32 drivers spread out along a mile of highway at 55mph; or 11 727 aircraft or four 747's; automobiles to hold 1400 people would make a line 20 miles long at 55mph.



(Photo above:) The last SR-operated northbound SOUTHERN CRESCENT arrives in Washington DC on Feb 1, with E8 unit 6901 at the front. Photo by Peter Roehm.

The regular consist of the Amtrak CRESCENT will be three E-8 engines and 10 cars. The consist maximum will be 18 cars, and a fourth engine will be added when the number exceeds 13 cars. All 13 remaining E-8 units of Southern are being leased by Amtrak, and four more Amtrak engines will be added to the power pool. Of SR's 84 cars, 56 are being obtained by Amtrak on a lease-purchase arrangement. These include 2 baggage-express cars, 6 coach-lounges, 25 coaches, 5 diners, and 18 sleepers.

Amtrak at once began advertising the new service with newspaper ads that read: "Every day, Amtrak makes a grand old tradition a great new ride. Amtrak's taken over the SOUTHERN CRESCENT route. So now, when you travel to Washington, New Orleans or points along the way, you get the best of the CRESCENT and the best of Amtrak for a train ride that can't be beat. You'll get the same old down-home feeling--at new down-to-earth fares. There's daily Atlanta-New Orleans service now... We've kept the romance of a great train. And added terrific features of our own you'll just love."

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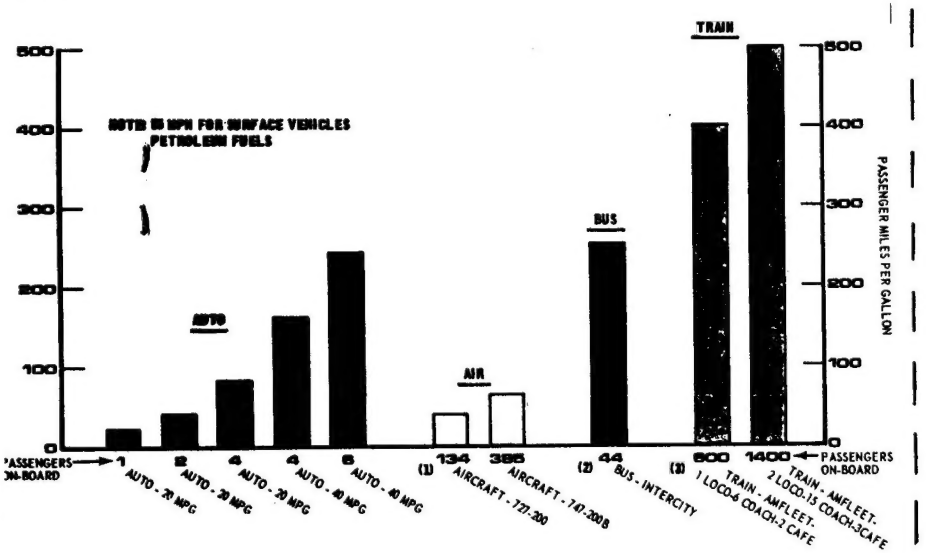

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CALTRANS BLASTS THE DOT PLAN

(Text of a letter Feb 9 from California Transportation Director Adriana Gianturco to DOT's Brock Adams, about the DOT plan)

The plan presented by your department for a major cutback of rail service provided by Amtrak ignores many of the fundamental issues and problems which Congress asked you to examine. The plan does not answer the question of how to improve rail passenger service--it simply wields an axe on those patrons of the Amtrak system deemed politically vulnerable.

The plan is well suited for another era--the era of the 1950's. It makes sense in terms of a world in which energy is not a problem, in which taxpayers are willing to expend billions of dollars to greatly expand highways and airports, and in which there is plenty of cheap open land for such expansion.

It does not make sense for the 1980's. To the degree that the plan cuts back the network of passenger train service, it forecloses the possibility that intercity public transportation can play a part in reducing petroleum waste. Rail routes cannot be easily reclaimed once they are discarded. Just as with Conrail, it would take many years and billions of dollars to bring tracks back up to passenger train standards if they are allowed to be downgraded.

In the case of another national energy shortage--a likely occurence considering current events in Iran--it would not be possible to revive the demolished stations, deteriorated track, and scrapped trains. A system such as is proposed by your department, which leaves unserved the largest cities of 18 of the 48 continental states, is not a national system and is not capable of serving national needs.

There are also major questions of regional equity raised by the Restructuring Report. The already underserved West and South are victims of severe cutbacks in service, while the Northeast Corridor retains all its service. Under the proposed route structure, Californians would receive one-fifth and Texans one-tenth of the per-capita Amtrak expenditures in the Northeast.

We view this as an attempt by the department to destroy the national constituency for rail service. Programs for transportation improvement can only be undertaken feasibly on a national basis, and projects such as the Westway or the Northeast Corridor Improvement, which benefit only one region, threaten the continuance of such programs.

Why should Californians pay for a $1.1 billion highway that serves only one area in Manhattan? Why should Californians, likewise, pay for the rehabilitation of bankrupt Northeastern freight railroads? When Californians are told that they will have to pay for hourly Northeastern Amtrak service, yet that the Federal government cannot afford the few insufficient, once-daily California services that now exist, the point of absurdity is reached.

The only rationale for the cutbacks which your report gives in a financial one. I submit that the alleged savings are minor, and that they do not justify the 43% cut in the Amtrak route system. The $166 million savings claimed for 1980 amount to less than 1% of the Federal transportation budget. This would build about 6/10 of a mile of the Westway or about 4 miles of freeway in Southern California. For this, we would lose over 10,000 miles of rail service.

The following are some of our initial comments on specific route and service changes proposed by the report:

(1) SOUTHWEST LIMITED. Current figures dispute the FRA's contention

that this route has been negatively affected by airline deregulation. It currently accounts for 4% of Amtrak's total revenues, and ridership is sharply up, as of this fall. Combining this train with the S.F.-Denver-Chicago service would cut each train's peak season capacity by one-half. This would mean that only 40% of peak-period requests for space would be filled, instead of the present 80%... The proposed combination of the SOUTHWEST with the SF ZEPHYR would put both San Francisco and Los Angeles passengers over marginal track between Denver and Kansas City. This track is capable of only 60mph top speed. This would add at least 11 1/2 hours to the L.A.-Chicago trip time, making the speed 43mph instead of the present 55. In order to reach Chicago in time for connections eastward, the SFZ and Los Angeles connection would each have to leave in early morning. This would mean a break in the L.A. connection between the COAST STARLIGHT and the Chicago-bound train. Each service would suffer major ridership losses which are not reflected in the DOT's estimates. Over a period of 5 years, the meandering route, poor trackage, and overly slow schedule will likely dry up most of the remaining ridership of any such train. Over the long run, the supposed cost saving will evaporate, as riders cannot be attracted to a clearly second-rate service. The SOUTHWEST is currently one of Amtrak's fastest and most heavily-used trains. It should not be downgraded into a connecting slow route. The fact that DOT previously advocated keeping this train further undercuts its credibility in proposing its partial deletion. The rerouting of the L.A.-Chicago run via an "Overland" route can only be tolerated if direct service with 55mph end-point to end-point speeds is provided. A second train must be provided to carry Denver-Chicago traffic because one train does not have adequate capacity to serve so many markets.

At the first running of Amtrak's INTER-AMERICAN on Jan 27, 1973 (see photo at Austin, Texas) the support for train service in that area was obvious. Amtrak ran the train into the ground, and now the DOT wants to cut it out of the system entirely. Photo by Alfred E. Ehm.

(2) SAN JOAQUIN. Insofar as this train was previously included in DOT's route proposal, its deletion here appears to constitute a "moving target" approach. This service has never been given a chance to succeed. It requires (1) a marketable schedule, (2) an extension into the 12 million population Southern California area, (3) resolution of double-crewing problems which unnecessarily raise its operating costs. The issue of whether Amtrak should have access to the railroads required to connect important cities was sidestepped by the DOT. Instead of addressing the issue that Atlanta, Dallas, and Los Angeles are avoided by the routes of the FLORIDIAN, LONE STAR, and SAN JOAQUIN, the trains in question were simply deleted.

(3) COAST STARLIGHT. The proposal for rerouting the STARLIGHT via Sacramento, Marysville, and Chico which was contained in the draft report is not carried forth in the final. We do not understand why this positive suggestion was dropped. Ridership of the STARLIGHT would be negatively affected by elimination of the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, and SOUTHWEST LIMITED. DOT revenue and ridership estimates do not adequately reflect this.

SOUTHERN HANDS OVER THE CRESCENT
by Peter Roehm

That's it! The last one! The last privately operated full-service train in the country and most likely the world went the way of all too many amenities in life on January 31: The SOUTHERN CRESCENT is no more--at least not as most of us will remember it.

And just moments before, Ross Capon of NARP and I and many others had finished listening to Brock Adams announce the CRESCENT's ultimate demise, as he presented his plan to cut back Amtrak. Ross and I were not enroute to our Washington connection with the SOUTHERN CRESCENT and musing over the Adams conference in Southern coach 819. Ross said that the DOT plan would be defeated by Congress, but that to be sure that this would happen Congress must hear from the "grass roots" immediately and honestly about retaining, at least, the present Amtrak system. Congress must hear loud and clear that their message to Brock (Let-Them-Take-the-Bus) Adams is to keep Amtrak and expand it.

A number of us on this Corridor run were contemplating that upon arrival at Washington we would quickly cross the platform to the diner for first sitting, but in the meanwhile one of our compatriots from Northampton MA, Steve Prosternan, bound for Los Angeles, offered to share with eight of us grouped in the lounge (Amtrak car 3632 "Henry Knox") his supply of smoked salmon, two cheeses, Finn Crisp and Courvoisier. The galley was vacant, so he and one of the ladies with us set to prepare the hors d'oeuvres that we would savor with the cognac while discussing Brock Adams' busing plan on the one hand and the state of the SOUTHERN CRESCENT on the other. Where can one really enjoy travel like this except on a train?

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The last SOUTHERN CRESCENT was 14 cars of bustling activity, especially in the diner and the bedroom/lounge. One might have thought Deputy Prime Minister Teng was on board. Mark Weinberger was--he was going to Culpeper, and is the Supervisor of Systems Research for the CRESCENT's new parent. On board too was Ron Hollander of Town and Country Magazine gathering material for a future article that will include this train (he did mention it in the January T&C in an article on Charlotte, North Carolina). The New Yorker's Frimbo was conspicuously absent. But Mary Stewart Hammond was there. She wrote the fine tribute to the late Southern chef Louis Price, in the Dec 26 New York Times, and will finish her manuscript next December for her book on the social history of the SOUTHERN CRESCENT ("And Then There Were None"). And one more prominent person was busily dashing to and fro shaking hands--Russell Holmes of the Bronx. He was enroute to Atlanta for a luncheon the next day to honor him and seven other on-board employees with diamond pins for, according to a Southern news release, "making the SOUTHERN CRESCENT's name synonymous with quality passenger train service." Bedroom/lounge "Crescent Moon" in today's consist was one of the cars that Russell Holmes used to look after--this writer's trip in Jan 1977 in the Master Room of that car was attended to by this gregarious, pleasant gentleman. He retired not long ago.

There were Southern officials on board too, altho former presidents Brosnan and Claytor had gone south the evening before along with Mr. Crane. Graham Claytor, now Secretary of the Navy, would be on train 2 northbound

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Mixed Train of Thoughts

AMTRAK'S ANNUAL REPORT for 1978 was issued on Feb 28. The 36-page report, printed in black and white, is tastefully and elegantly done. In the opening President's Report, Alan Boyd calls again for development of the "contractual" arrangement with Congress that DOT doesn't want. Says Boyd, "A similar approach has been adopted in several other countries with extensive rail passenger services --many of which are operated for social as well as economic reasons--and it has provided the necessary stability and clarity of national purpose in the continuation of specific services." Boyd also says that "this report marks the end of an era" and that given the many possible outcomes of the "initiatives that are underway", "next year's annual report should prove to be very interesting reading." (See also Quotes of the Week, page 20)..... NBC-TV NIGHTLY NEWS on Mar 5 showed films of rail lobbyists who had ridden the CARDINAL to Washington for the Senate hearings on the Amtrak cutback plan. About 50 ordinary citizens--not railfans--riding the threatened train arrived in Washington at 1pm, delayed several hours by a rockslide. Their mission was to "Save the CARDINAL", and they noted that several places like Hinton WV would have no public transportation at all if the train is dropped.....

* * *

NEW YORK TIMES, which we criticized earlier for its pro-Amtrak-cutback editorials, all in one day (Feb 25) ran three marvelously pro-train pieces. First was Tom Wicker's column (see quote on page 5) which did a beautiful job of defending the need for more passenger trains. Tom Wicker was the first person we ever quoted in RTN, in the very first issue, as on Dec 1, 1970 he was defending the train while the Railpax system was in the making, and it looks as if we need him again. The second item was a news article, "Concern over cuts ride Amtrak route" written "aboard the MONTREALER" which related the concerns of MONTREALER passengers over the threatened loss of the train, as well as the fun of riding it. The third item was a massive article at the head of the Travel section, "Crossing the U.S. with a man who won't fly." It told the story of noted science fiction writer Isaac Asimov traveling roundtrip coast-to-coast on Amtrak, and was written by Janet Jeppson, his wife. The story was favorable to Amtrak, and we call it a minor classic. The New York Times also ran, since our last issue, an article by Rogers Whitaker, but we haven't seen it yet.....

* * *

AMTRAK'S DECEMBER RIDERSHIP figures were released on Feb 23, and the corporation was really happy to report the third consecutive month of rising patronage (compared with 1977). The overall increase was 7.5%, and "virtually all Amtrak routes shared in the gain." (The Oct and Nov figures were given in our last issue.) Northeast Corridor ridership was up 1.9%, short distance routes up 17.1%, and long distance trains up 11.5%. The NY-Florida trains posted an impressive 38.4% gain in riders, Seattle-Portland was up 68.8%, and the SAN DIEGANS were up 40.8%. Total system ridership was 1,728,858, compared with 1,608,281 in 1977. We also have SAN DIEGAN patronage figures for Jan 1979, and they increased 34% over Jan 1978--to 58,192. Amtrak said that re-scheduling the first morning run from San Diego to L.A. 30mins earlier has doubled ridership on it, averaging now almost 200 passengers per weekday trip (this is the former EL CAMINO run).....

NEW ST. LOUIS station being planned by Amtrak will not be built if the DOT cutback plan takes effect, Amtrak said as we were going to press. St. Louis now has a modular station built in a "record-setting" 45 days by Design Space International of Philadelphia. It was opened on Oct 31, 1978. Amtrak now says that the modular station "can be modified to meet our needs" in view of the DOT plan that Amtrak expects will take effect.....

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 ←(page printed out of sequence)

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AMTRAK'S ANNUAL REPORT for 1978 was issued on Feb 28. The 36-page report, printed in black and white, is tastefully and elegantly done. In the opening President's Report, Alan Boyd calls again for development of the "contractual" arrangement with Congress that DOT doesn't want. Says Boyd, "A similar approach has been adopted in several other countries with extensive rail passenger services --many of which are operated for social as well as economic reasons--and it has provided the necessary stability and clarity of national purpose in the continuation of specific services." Boyd also says that "this report marks the end of an era" and that given the many possible outcomes of the "initiatives that are underway", "next year's annual report should prove to be very interesting reading." (See also Quotes of the Week, page 20)..... NBC-TV NIGHTLY NEWS on Mar 5 showed films of rail lobbyists who had ridden the CARDINAL to Washington for the Senate hearings on the Amtrak cutback plan. About 50 ordinary citizens--not railfans--riding the threatened train arrived in Washington at 1pm, delayed several hours by a rockslide. Their mission was to "Save the CARDINAL", and they noted that several places like Hinton WV would have no public transportation at all if the train is dropped.....

* * *

NEW YORK TIMES, which we criticized earlier for its pro-Amtrak-cutback editorials, all in one day (Feb 25) ran three marvelously pro-train pieces. First was Tom Wicker's column (see quote on page 5) which did a beautiful job of defending the need for more passenger trains. Tom Wicker was the first person we ever quoted in RTN, in the very first issue, as on Dec 1, 1970 he was defending the train while the Railpax system was in the making, and it looks as if we need him again. The second item was a news article, "Concern over cuts ride Amtrak route" written "aboard the MONTREALER" which related the concerns of MONTREALER passengers over the threatened loss of the train, as well as the fun of riding it. The third item was a massive article at the head of the Travel section, "Crossing the U.S. with a man who won't fly." It told the story of noted science fiction writer Isaac Asimov traveling roundtrip coast-to-coast on Amtrak, and was written by Janet Jeppson, his wife. The story was favorable to Amtrak, and we call it a minor classic. The New York Times also ran, since our last issue, an article by Rogers Whitaker, but we haven't seen it yet.....

* * *

AMTRAK'S DECEMBER RIDERSHIP figures were released on Feb 23, and the corporation was really happy to report the third consecutive month of rising patronage (compared with 1977). The overall increase was 7.5%, and "virtually all Amtrak routes shared in the gain." (The Oct and Nov figures were given in our last issue.) Northeast Corridor ridership was up 1.9%, short distance routes up 17.1%, and long distance trains up 11.5%. The NY-Florida trains posted an impressive 38.4% gain in riders, Seattle-Portland was up 68.8%, and the SAN DIEGANS were up 40.8%. Total system ridership was 1,728,858, compared with 1,608,281 in 1977. We also have SAN DIEGAN patronage figures for Jan 1979, and they increased 34% over Jan 1978--to 58,192. Amtrak said that re-scheduling the first morning run from San Diego to L.A. 30mins earlier has doubled ridership on it, averaging now almost 200 passengers per weekday trip (this is the former EL CAMINO run).....

NEW ST. LOUIS station being planned by Amtrak will not be built if the DOT cutback plan takes effect, Amtrak said as we were going to press. St. Louis now has a modular station built in a "record-setting" 45 days by Design Space International of Philadelphia. It was opened on Oct 31, 1978. Amtrak now says that the modular station "can be modified to meet our needs" in view of the DOT plan that Amtrak expects will take effect.....

AMTRAK IS SUSPENDING two Metroliner roundtrips between NY and Washington effective Apr 1 because of "equipment shortages and increased work planned in the Northeast Corridor." These trains--trains 107, 113, 114, and 116--will be hit the most by delays due t track work, Amtrak said. The trains may be back as early as July or as late as October, said Amtrak, and in the meantime alternate service is available "within 10 to 30 minutes" of the suspended trains. Amtrak said 26 Metroliner cars have been sent to GE for rebuilding, and 8 more will be sent within the next few weeks..... AMTRAK FLATLY DENIED a rumor circulated by some sources that the SUNSET LIMITED would begin daily operation at the Apr 29 schedule change..... A NEW POLICY concerning the carrying aboard Amtrak trains of Mopeds and bicycles is expected to be announced by the rail corporation about Mar 15, after this issue goes to press. We have no other information on it.....

* * *

HIGH FLOOD WATER blocked the MONTREALER at Brattleboro VT on Mar 7, and passengers were bused between there and White River Junction..... SANTA FE FREIGHT derailment at Elvira CA disrupted SAN DIEGAN service on Feb 28. Trains ran only between L.A. and Oceanside, with buses to San Diego. Three of the 12 runs were cancelled because of equipment trapped in San Diego..... BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS sickout in the Chicago yards on Mar 1 delayed the makeup of Amtrak trains altho the dispute was between the BLE and Conrail..... THE NORTHBOUND CHAMPION, train 86, was delayed 38mins at Philadelphia on Mar 9 when it struck debris on the track..... A PITTSBURGH READER writes us as follows: "DOT is selling borderline lies coupled with simplistic statements... Local editorials say no one cares: so far no letters to the papers--why? Because they're cut and edited to remove the meat of the message- and because some of us have taken the time to do some homework and are just now getting some material out. For no purpose. The local morning paper has a transportation writer who knows the score: he never did a story (on the DOT plan); they only ran the Washington feed and the self-adulation of our Congressman --even the exact route changes were glossed over and one report at variance with another. If what's happening in Pittsburgh is happening nationwide; if the media and the politicians are doing everywhere what they're doing here--then for whatever it's worth, we're being cheated, lied to and sent back into our cars--with an impending oil crisis. Sickening! That's part of what's happening here, and I hope RTN will spread the word widely and loudly.....

* * *

SOFT ON DOT? Has Amtrak's Government Affairs Department gone from too abrasive to too soft? In its letter to all Congressmen sent the same day as the DOT plan release, the department avoided any word about possible negative aspects of the plan or any hint of inconvenience to the public. Quote: "PLEASE NOTE: The cost reductions represented by the DOT system include savings over and above the sum of savings attributable to each route. This is because the total recommended system is reduced sufficiently to achieve additional savings by reducing fixed costs. If a specific route were added back into the system, sufficient funds would be needed to cover the loss for that route plus a portion of the fixed cost. Also, potential capital funds to support that expansion would be required".....

MONTH OF FEBRUARY in the Washington-Baltimore area earned the distinction of being the coldest on record and with the most precipitation. Snow began in the afternoon of Sunday, Feb 18, hitting hardest in the Baltimore-DC area. Philadelphia got 10-12 inches less than the 20-22 inches that fell and drifted near the nation's capitol, in less than 24 hours, ending by noon Monday. Airports were closed--Baltimore-Washington International for a long 30 hours. Amtrak continued to run, tho with considerable delays. Metroliners were cancelled on Monday as the Amfleet continued to roll. Things were much better by Tuesday, but many people were snowed in on their side streets for days with no local transportation. Baltimore had essentially no bus service Monday and little Tuesday. The Washington Metro Rail system was completely shut down because it lacks snow removal equipment and because most employees couldn't make it to work. There was no service on Monday and Tuesday. Metro hired volunteers to shovel its facilities.....

THE SUPERTRAIN PROGRAM may be "sidetracked" later this month, according to TV industry reports..... THE ENERGY SITUATION continues to occupy a major portion of the news. We're getting quite a big clipping file on that topic alone, and could easily do a whole newsletter on it. The latest somber news comes from Energy Secretary James Schlesinger, who testified before the Senate Energy Committee on Mar 12. He indicated that voluntary conservation in the U.S. isn't working, since oil consumption hit record levels--21 million barrels per day--in the past month. He said that a cutoff of oil from the Persian Gulf lasting a year would end the "free world as we knew it in 1945." "The impact of a year's cutoff would be devastating." And two days before, on Mar 10, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment released a major study that warned that "If present policies are continued unchanged and if current trends of increased automobile use persist, the nation will face a serious petroleum shortage." It said that "The implications of this potential supply shortage are profound and pose a serious threat to our continued reliance on the automobile as the predominant mode of personal transportation." Gasoline has been steadily rising in price here, and the real pinch will come this summer, according to most indications. When a sizeable energy crunch arises, pity those places without Amtrak service. Remember how in the 1973-4 energy crisis the NY Times called Amtrak the "hottest show in town"?.....

FRENCH NATIONAL RAILROADS have put out the advertising sticker at left to sell Eurailpasses.....

NEW WEST MAGAZINE'S Mar 12 issue carries a major article, "Southern Pacific's Hidden Empire" by Bruce MacGregor, author of "Portrait of a Silver Lady", about pre-Amtrak train service. The gist of the article: "The hidden empire of the Southern Pacific is so vast that it controls virtually every important area of policy and growth in California: energy, land, transportation, urban development and environment. The color cover reproduces the well-known publicity painting of the 1950's SP SHASTA DAYLIGHT in the Cascade Mountains.....

THAT 20% CUTBACK in Amtrak management jobs we reported earlier is accurate. As of Feb 21, 154 jobs had been cut (but not all "high-level" jobs, as the Washington Post reported). That represents about 12% of 1323 Amtrak positions, for a payroll savings of about $3 million per year. Most of the 154 cuts were announced on Feb 16..... ENGLISH CHANNEL TUNNEL to carry one track will be dug by British Rail, at a cost of $1.3 billion. A 2-track tunnel to cost $3.6 billion was rejected back in 1975..... HIGHWAY TRAFFIC FATALITIES rose in 1978 above the 50,000 mark for the first time since the 55mph speed limit was imposed. In 1973 there were 54,052 deaths, and this dropped to 45,196 the next year when the new speed limit was established. The 1978 preliminary figure was 50,145, a sharp increase from the 1977 toll of 47,876 (a 4.7% rise). The DOT surveyed drivers late last spring and found that 56% "strongly favored" the 55mph speed.....

SANTA FE RAILWAY will abandon this spring its 9.2-mile freight line between Richmond and Emeryville CA, familiar to everyone in this area for its slow freights that whistle romantically in the foggy nights. Passenger trains used the line at one time. Most of the land will be given to the cities, and the Santa Fe will obtain trackage rights on the SP (Amtrak) line..... A STRANGE CONSIST of Amtrak equipment (F7 engine 492, coach 4460, and dome observation 9250 "Silver Horizon") with the entire consist except the left side painted gold, has been seen recently at L.A.'s Union Station. The equipment is being used in the filming of a movie. Also noted there was Amtrak coach 4405, set afire by vandals and completely gutted..... CHESSIE STEAM ENGINE 2101 was very badly damaged in a Mar 6 roundhouse fire at the Chessie System's big yards in Silver Grove KY.....

WESTBOUND BROADWAY LIMITED, train 41, derailed at 10:18pm on Feb 17 at Milepost 244.9 between MG Tower and Gallitzin PA, due to a spread rail. The third

E unit and the next 8 cars derailed, with cars 9 and 10 remaining on the rails.....

PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT to Egypt included a Mar 9 train ride from Cairo to Alexandria. It was the first instance known to us of Carter, who seems to dislike trains, riding a train since becoming president..... THE SNOW CONTINUED until late in the winter in Chicago. A Feb 26 report says that a snowstorm began the night before, and trains were running "as slow as ever" in the Midwest. The storm of Feb 25 was believed to have delayed the NATIONAL LIMITED and PANAMA LTD, and the LAKE SHORE LIMITED arrived Chicago at 10pm on the 26th (due 3:30pm).....

SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR was regularly arriving Oakland late at night a few weeks ago..... TILTING TALGO CARS are being built for the Madrid-Paris run; the cars can change gauges without stopping for truck replacement when crossing the international border. 132 Talgo coaches are being built for Spanish trains, and sleeping cars will run on the Madrid-Paris line..... READER JOHN PORCO calculates that the DOT's proposed Chicago to L.A. and San Francisco train would take 10 hours longer for the run than at present, based on former UP running times. This would effectively kill the service..... STAGE, SCREEN, TV actress Hermione Gingold, 80-year old British comedienne, was injured when she tripped on a damp platform at Kansas City's station, after departing sleeping car 1501 on the LONE STAR on Mar 5. She was headed for an engagement at the Lyric Theatre, where she was to appear in "Side by Side by Sondheim"..... 31 ASPIRING OWNERS have filed to take over 13 small branch lines now handled by Conrail in New York State, but suffering poor service..... CHICAGO TO SEATTLE service is in very bad shape, with so much equipment out of service that trains are sometimes cancelled. Unlucky Tuesday Feb 13 saw BN's Marias Pass route closed by snowslides, blocking the line 24hrs. Rail Traffic, including the EMPIRE BUILDER, were reported detoured via Helena & Great Falls to the main line at Havre..... THE COASTSTARLIGHT is once again using SDP40F engines on BN tracks between Seattle and Portland. BN continues to limit the units' speeds on curves, so the STARLIGHT is losing some time between the two cities..... NORTH COAST HIAWATHA due to lv Seattle on Feb 21 was cancelled for lack of equipment. The HIAWATHA due into Seattle 8:30am on Feb 23 arrived about 4pm..... LATE FEBRUARY MEETING between Amtrak's Alan Boyd and the DOT's Brock Adams reportedly saw agreement between them that the MONTREALER and CRESCENT shold remain in a scaled-down Amtrak system..... WHEN AMTRAK'S CRESCENT began operation Feb 1, the Charlottesville VA stations were consolidated into one--the SR station at 810 W. Main St. Likevise in Birmingham AL, where the Amtrak station at 1819 Morris Ave. is used--the SR station required a back-in movement..... OUR MANY THANKS to those who sent us material on the SOUTHERN CRESCENT changeover--including Lyle Key, Claude M. Dixon Jr., and the RR Enthusiasts, Chesapeake & Old Dominion Division, who distributed a commenorative issue of their newsletter to passengers on the last run..... AMTRAK SAID SALES of the unlimited-travel USA Rail Pass were up 23% (in revenue) in fiscal 1978.....

WE URGE YOU to send a note to your Congressman about the DOT cutback plan as soon as you receive this issue of RTN. The situation is very critical..... News in this issue is updated thru March 12, 1979.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Perhaps the most salient element in this annual report on Amtrak's operating results in 1978 is that we were forced to operate for the entire year without a single new Superliner-equipped long-distance train in service."

--Amtrak President Alan S. Boyd in 1978 Annual Report.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"BART Tube Opening Close."

--Headline in Oakland (CA) Tribune, Mar 3.

(Which is it, open or closed?)

RAIL FANTRIPS

Apr 22: 5th Annual Railroad Extravaganza 10am-5pm, Dover Senior High School, Dover NJ. RR collectibles & models. $1.50, kids 75¢. Info: Rich Stabell, Tri-State Rwy Historical Society, PO Box 255, Dover NJ 07801.

Apr 22: Delta Riverboat Race, Sacramento Delta to San Francisco; M.V. "Emperor" & M.V. "Prince". Info: Delta Travel Agency, 1240 Merkley Ave., West Sacramento CA 95691. (916) 371-6711.

Apr 29: SEPTA-Conrail MP54 MU trip, Phila.-Trenton RT, 6-car train of SEPTA MP54 MU coaches. Lv Penn Center Suburban Sta. 10:30am EDT, back at 5pm. $17.50, kids $15. Phila. Chapter NRHS, PO Box 7302, Philadelphia PA 19101. Include SASE.

May 12: 10th Anniversary program, Dixie Division, Nat'l Model RR Ass'n Inc., Georgian Colonies Clubhouse, 3725 Dunsinane Dr, Silver Spring MD 20906. $1.00. Info: Frank A. Pearsall, 9651 Bruce Ct, Manassas VA 22110. (703) 369-5658.

Oct 2-10: Private car "Camelot" trip Milwaukee-Chicago-New Orleans RT. Info: PO Box 3182, Omaha NE 68103; call noon-2pm (402) 341-6889. (ex-KCS 14/4 slpr).

Spring weekends: 1-day riverboat excursions, Sat. San Francisco-Stockton, Sun. Stockton-S.F. 500-psgr M.V. "Emperor". Info: Delta Travel Agency, 1240 Merkley Ave., West Sacramento CA 95691. (916) 371-6711.

One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send full info to: Rail Travel News, Fantrips Dept., PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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TROLLEY NOSTALGIA: "Trolley Trails Through the West": Vol. 1 - Yakima, Vol. 2 - Seattle, Vol. 3 - Portland, Vol. 4 - Tacoma, Spokane, Bellingham, etc., Vol. 5 - Montana and Utah $3.00 each. Moneyback guarantee. Wilson Bros. Publications, Box 712RTN, Yakima WA 98907.

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THREE 1979 RAILFAN FUN-TRIPS--May 10-25 MEXICO including Copper Canyon, Mexico City, street cars, subway, and private cars MISTLETOE & SOONERLAND--July 19-29 MISSISSIPPI QUEEN river cruise St. Louis to Cincinnati including Transport Museum & AMTRAK Beech Grove shop--Sept 25 to Oct 7 NEW ENGLAND foliage trip including Edaville Railroad, Mt. Washington Cog, Steamtown, & Seashore Trolley Museum. Basic travel by trains--join anywhere using AMTRAK connections. For complete brochures and rates, call or write MIDWEST TRAVEL SERVICE, Howard B. Thornton, Director, 2936R Bella Vista, Midwest City, Oklahoma, 73110--405-732-0566.

RAILROADIANA AUCTION Sat. May 5 sponsored by Pottstown NRHS at Old Lukes Church, behind the Post Office Gilbertsville PA. 400 lots of collectibles Lanterns, Builder Plates, Timetables, and much more. For info write Ted Maurer, 1931 N. Charlotte St., Pottstown PA 19464. Inspection at 9am, sale at 11am.

FOR SALE: 44 "Model Trains" magazines, 50's-60's, and 52 "Railway Progress" magazines (50's). All-$4.00 postpaid. Clinton Larson, Box 611, La Crosse WI 54601.

MARCH 24-25: 4th Annual "Sierra Snowflake Special" Oakland-Reno RT, private open-platform Autoliner 100 on SFZ; limit 25 psgrs. $87.50, motel extra. Dr. Brian L. Jennison, 1555 Oxford #103, Berkeley CA 94709. (415) 548-0451.

SAVINGS ON YOUR DOLLAR: In Canada your American dollar is worth $1.13. Change your money here to get full value. Start bothering VIA now for spring and summer reservations for Canadian Rail Travel. You won't regret your decision, and you'll save money. TRANSPORT 2000, Box 300 Terminal A, Ottawa K1N 8V3.

Cop-out? Instead of addressing CRESCENT and FLORIDIAN rerouting questions/merits, the brilliant bureaucrat simply zapped them. Well, we will get what we deserve. Nothing would be as glorious, as inspiring, as Amtrak saving itself at the next timetable, a most unlikely event with me not programmed in in advance of their Feb. 28th board meeting. Instead, good railroadmen shudder at the incompetency in Washington?..Amtrak Law/$8/catalyst RJSwan/Box 1866/Long Beach CA 90801.

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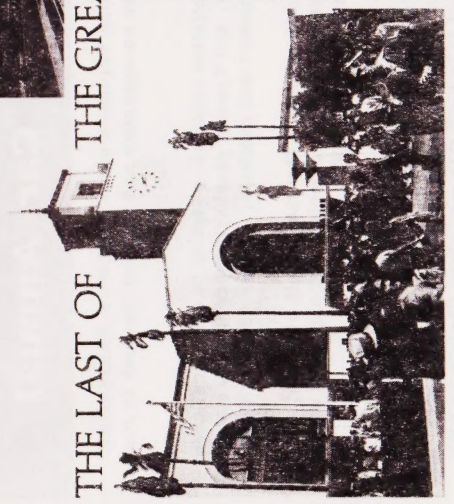

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